

My comments are on Section 7 and are organized in two parts:

- Part 1 – Missing / incomplete facts / perspective
- Part 2 - Suggestions on specific statements that require reworking.

Part 1. Missing / Incomplete Facts

Overall, I believe an excellent job was done in summarizing an extended and complex era of California history in the concise way required by space constraints. However, I believe this section would be more accurate and useful if (in at least a summary fashion) the following information / perspective was included:

1. The mission-focused colonization effort in California was limited to the coastal areas. If you accept the estimate of the total native population as 300,000 in 1768 (page 89, line 125) then it is important to understand that the number of Indians living in the areas where missions were ultimately founded were only about 20-25% of the total. There is very little commentary in the synopsis about the “other” Indians, who were living a more traditional life. Some of the richest insights / made from life illustrations of Indian villages and Indian life were made outside the coastal areas in the last half of the 19th century, after the American takeover.
2. The major impact of the Spanish exploration, conquest and settlement on the total native population was the introduction and spread of European diseases, which was true in other sections of the United States and the world. This tragedy happened under many different approaches to colonization and wasn't inherent in the approach followed in California. The impact was severe on the entire Indian population (mission Indians and other Indians), which declined significantly.
3. This overview does not make it clear that the missions themselves went through three major phases. One gets the impression in the current draft that throughout the entire mission era Indians were baptized and moved into a contained, self-sufficient mission communities.
 - a. Most of the missions were still struggling enterprises through the early 1790s, with many of the baptized Indians living in their own villages. There were only eleven missions in 1790, with a total population of under 8,000 neophytes.
 - b. The “golden age” of the missions was in the late 1790s through the first 12-15 years of the 1800s. But even then, while the neophytes were increasingly concentrated into housing that was part of / adjacent to the central mission complex there were different living patterns. Some neophytes lived on Ranchos (tending livestock, agricultural fields) or on separate asistencia (sub-missions, like San Antonio de Pala) where there was no missionary resident.

- c. The character and management of the missions changed in 1821 with the Mexican takeover. The Northern Missions were managed by less well-trained missionaries, some of whom were of unfavorable character; the soldiers (who were seldom paid in these years) became more abusive. The number of available missionaries declined. The quality of mission life ranged from harmonious at, for example, San Luis Rey, (the mission with the largest population) to quite poor at more remote and smaller missions like La Purisima.

Part 2 – Statements in the draft requiring reexamination – rewording

1. Page 93 (pages 212 to 226)

- a. Initially missions attracted many Indians who were impressed by the pageantry and material wealth of the Catholic Church . Some were attracted to the beliefs, the religious ceremonies and the pageantry. However the quality, abundance and sustainability of the food was probably a bigger attraction in the years after a mission became self-sufficient and had large livestock herds, orchards and agricultural fields.

There wasn't much 'material wealth' evident.

Leadership, which is not discussed, made a major difference. For example Fr. Antonio Peyri (who administered San Luis Rey for 33 years) was an energetic leader with a genial personality. This mission's population was over three times the mission average, run-aways less and the day-to-day life continually improved for the residents.

- b. Missionaries and presidio soldiers conspired to forcibly keep the Indians in residence....cattle ranches and civilian pueblos (were) often built by forced Indian labor. Forced labor is a simplistic, negative phase for a much more complex transaction.
2. Under the guidance of Fray Junípero Serra 54,000 Indians became baptized at the missions where they spent anywhere from two to fifty weeks each year laboring to sustain the missions. This needs a total rewrite.
- a. The commentary should focus on the entire mission era. Serra only founded the first nine missions.
 - b. The total baptized in the mission era was 87,787
 - c. The Indian neophytes were given time to visit their home villages / pursue hunting, fishing, acorn gathering etc. several weeks of the year, typically 2-3 weeks.
 - d. They "labored" about six to seven hours a day five to six days a week with 20-30 "holidays" (mostly extended 1-3 day celebrations around the feasts of Saints.
 - e. They "labored" to generate the food, clothing, blankets and buildings necessary to for them and the other residents to live.
3. Some mission Indians sought to escape the system by fleeing from the padres while a few Indians openly revolted and killed missionaries.

- a. The number of runaways was 10-15% at some missions, but it varied by mission, by period and by the quality of the leadership.
 - b. While there were some who fled a specific Padre, the reasons they fled are as complex and varied as why people get a divorce or leave a job.
 - c. There were revolts (the largest and most effective at Santa Ines / Santa Barbara / La Purisima in 1824), but uprisings tended to be group affairs. There were a couple attempts to kill padres that are documented. There are, however, other efforts to keep beloved padres at a mission. When Peyri left California to return to Spain hundreds of neophytes followed him from San Luis Rey to San Diego to plead with him to stay.
4. Page 97, lines 307-318.
- a. ...led to a campaign to secularize the missions as early as the late 1700s. This statement is unclear and not really accurate. There were several efforts to begin encouraging / allowing / supporting selected neophytes to be given land and establish themselves outside the mission community but the real pressure for secularization began in the Mexican era (1821>). Secularization did not take place until much later and at different times for each mission.... during 1833-36).
 - b. ...Native Californians were supposed to receive half of the mission land.... Not sure of source for that statement. Theoretically all of the mission land belong to the Indians. There were lots of different ideas and proposals. Whatever the final plan, relatively few Indians were given land. A pueblo de Indios was established near San Juan Capistrano in 1833 but there weren't enough Indians to sustain a viable town and this experiment failed, with the land distributed to the Indians who stayed and to settlers.

David J. McLaughlin

I am the author of over a dozen books, timelines, biographies and other material on the early history of California, focused primarily on the mission era. ***The California Missions Source Book***, written with my colleague Dr. Ruben Mendoza, is the leading reference books on the missions and the Mission Era. For over ten years I have supported and managed the development of a robust website www.missionscalifornia.com that had 1.3 million distinct visitors in 2015.